DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 337 377 SO 021 317

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TITLE "The Wilder Years," The Little House Books and Other Resources on the Westward Movement.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Literature; Educational Resources; Elementary Schools; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Materials; Middle Schools; *Social Studies; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Pioneer Life; *Westward Movement (United States)

ABSTRACT

This 69-item annotated bibliography of books and materials focuses on the movement westward into the California and Oregon territories in the middle nineteenth century. Elementary and middle school teachers are encouraged to use children's literature and other materials as supplements to textbook instruction. These materials are organized into three main sections: historical fiction books about the westward expansion, non-fiction books about westward expansion, and children's magazines and additional materials about westward expansion. (DB)

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"THE WILDER YEARS"

THE LITTLE HOUSE BOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES ON THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT

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"THE WILDER YEARS"

THE LITTLE HOUSE BOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES ON THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT

Between 1840 and 1870, a quarter of a million Americans crossed the continental United States, some twenty-four hundred miles of it. They participated in one of the great migrations of modern times. These pioneers went West to claim free land in the Oregon and California Territories, and they went West to strike it rich by mining gold and silver. Men and women knew they were engaged in nothing less than extending American possession of the continent from ocean to ocean. No other event of the century except the Civil War evoked so many personal accounts as the overland passage.

The emigrants came from Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana, and some all the way from New York and New Hampshire. Most of them had moved to 'free land' at least once before, and their parents and grandparents before them had similarly made several removals during their lifetime. These were a class of peasant proprietors. They had owned land before and would own land again. They were young and consumed with boundless confidence, believing the better life tomorrow could be won by the hard work of today.

Both children and adults are fascinated with this period in American history when courageous individuals struggled across the country on foot, on horseback, or in covered wagons. We like to hear about those who rode on canal barges, floated on rafts down the Ohio, or traveled on steamboats down the Mississippi. We also enjoy vicariously experiencing the frontier years after the covered wagons had been unloaded and families began their new lives in a sod house or a log cabin. These are the "Wilder Years" with stories like Little house on the prairie and On the banks of Plum Creek by Laura Engles Wilder and My Antonio by Willa Cather.

The purpose of this article with its annotated bibliography is to encourage teachers to capture the vitality of the pioneer period by using children's literature and other materials as supplement to textbook instruction. Increasingly, social studies educators acknowledge that literary works have instructional usefulness as resources for social studies classrooms (Arizona State Board of Education, 1988; California State Department of Education, 1988; the University of the State of New York 1982; Wisconsin Department

of Public Instruction 1983). These guidelines emphasize a strong relationship between literature and social studies teaching particularly in the elementary years.

In addition, current studies by Bruner, 1986; Rabonowitz, 1987; and Levstik and Pappas, 1987 suggests that historical data must be embedded in meaningful context in order for children to recognize relationships among historical concepts. These researchers suggest that historically accurate fiction can become a vehicle to explain the past. Historical fiction with its emphasis on subjectivity and detail stands in sharp contrast to the textbook in which readers are told so little about the people and events that shaped history that children cannot begin to bond or feel empathy or sympathy with them. By using historical fiction in tandem with textbook instruction, the story becomes the framework upon which children can begin to pin their understandings of a movement or era. These fictionalized accounts if accurate in detail and legitimate in interpretation can serve as intellectual scaffolding upon which understandings can be built.

The following books and materials can help children understand the past and explore the lives of those who lived before them with clarity and admiration.

HISTORICAL FICTION BOOKS ABOUT WESTWARD EXPANSION

The following books describe the trials and triumphs of the overland journey and homesteading.

OVERLAND JOURNEY

These books provide students in grades 4-10 with a vicarious trip by wagon train to the California and Oregon Territories.

Chambers, C.E. 1984. Wagons West: Off to Oregon. Mahwah, New Jersey: Troll Associates.
This book is about the Stoddard children who were orphaned on their journey to Oregon. It is really a non-fiction in the guise of fiction because the story contains a wealth of factual information about travel by wagon train on the Oregon Trail.

Graham, V. 1952. Treasure in the covered wagon: A story of the Oregon Trail. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.
This book is based on the author's great-grandfather who emigrated from Missouri to Oregon in 1845. The great-grandfather is Dan in the story. One of the strong points of the book is the depiction of the competence of women and girls on the trip. The author vividly describes the crossing of the Great Plains and the incredible feeling of accomplishment the travelers felt upon reaching their destination.

Gregory, K. 1989. Jenny of the Tetons. San Diego: Gulliver.
After an Indian raid on her family's wagon train, Carrie Hill is orphaned. She is befriended by an English trapper and his wife. Though Carrie is fictional, the story is based on excerpts from the trapper's journal. Illustrated with maps.

Harvey, B. 1988. Cassie's journey: Going West in the 1860's. New York: Holiday House.
Based on true accounts like those in Women's diaries of the westward journey by Lillian Schlissel, the story of Cassie is presented in journal format. Cassie describes the landscape, routine jobs along the trail, the hazards and sorrows of the trip as well as the shared accomplishments and mutual support among the pioneers. Elementary children will enjoy Cassie's trip from Illinois to California.

Hays, W. P. 1972. For ma and pa: On the Oregon Trail, 1844. New York: Coward, McCann and Goeghegan, Inc.
Based on a true story, this book is about seven courageous children who played their part in claiming Oregon for the United States. The fast-paced action and story level are particularly suitable for young readers.

Levitin, S. 1978. The no-return trail. San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich.
This book is based on the true story of Nancy Kelsey, a member of the Bidwell-Bartleson Expedition of 1841 who traveled to California. This wagon was the first to journey all the way from Missouri to California, and Nancy was among the first white women to make the trip. An epilogue to the book explains what happened to each person on the train upon reaching California.

St. George, J. 1978. The halo wind. New York: G. P. Putman's Sons.
This book is about the Thatcher family on the Oregon Trail. It is a realistic depiction of crossing the United States from the Midwest to the Oregon Territory.

Stevens, C. 1979. Trouble for Lucy. New York: Clarion Books.
This is a warm, human story of a family and their friends during a difficult journey that took six months. The author based some of the book on diaries, letters, and recollections written by actual pioneers. Each chapter begins with a brief excerpt from one of these original sources. The Indians are portrayed favorably and in the afterword, the author explains that it was not until the 1860's that the Indians became hostile as they witnessed the white people taking their best lands and killing the herds of buffalo.

Other Books About the Overland Journey West

Holling, H. C. 1942. Tree in the trail. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Jones, W. 1968. Edge of two worlds. New York: Dial Press.

Moeri, L. 1981. Save queen of Sheba. New York: E. P. Dutton.

Murrow, L. K. 1987. West against the wind. New York: Holiday House.

Yates, E. 1964. Carolina's courage. New York: E. P. Dutton.

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HOMESTEADING

These books provide students with a realistic picture of the life of a homesteader.

Calvert, P. 1980. The snowbird. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
When Willanna and T.J.'s parents are killed in a fire, the two children travel to the Red River area in the Dakota Territory to live with their aunt and uncle. The children learn about the hardships and loneliness of life on the prairie, and Willanna gains comfort from her beloved horse, Snowbird. The book illustrates how prairie life was unbearable for some people and that not everyone was successful in farming.

Chambers, C. E. 1984. Frontier farmer: Kansas adventures. Mahwah, New Jersey: Troll Associates.
This is a story about the Fosters and the Lees who are farmers and their conflict with the ranchers during the 1880's. The book would be a springboard for research and discussion of how farmers and ranchers dealt with their differences.

Hancock, M. A. 1969. The thundering prairie. Philadelphia: Macrae Smith Co.
The book is based on the recollections of individuals who participated in the land runs of the late 1890's. Children will enjoy learning about this phenomenal aspect of the development of the West which is not often found in children's books. It would be important to discuss the Homestead Act of 1862 as background to the story.

Harvey, B. 1986. My prairie year: Based on the diary of Elenore Plaisted. New York: Holiday House.
Based on the reminiscences of Elenore Plaisted, this book details the life of a family of Dakota homesteaders. Family unity is strong and children are seen as integral and

productive members in establishing the family's new home. The book's author is the grandson of Elenore Plaisted.

Hughes, D. 1982. Facing the enemy. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company.
This is a story of a family who endures anti-Mormon sentiment in Missouri. This is a realistic portrayal of the religious intolerance experienced by Mormons in our nation's early history. Readers are allowed to see both sides of the issue.

Lawlor, L. 1986. Addie across the prairie. Niles, Illinois: Albert Whitman and Company.
This book provides a picture of how difficult homesteading was on children. Much of the story is told from the viewpoint of Addie Mills, a nine year old. Even though a child, she feels the great isolation of the prairie.

Maclachlan, P. 1985. Sarah, plain and tall. New York: Harper and Row.
This is the story of a mail-order bride who wins the hearts of a widower and his two children. In this Newbery-award-winning book, Sarah is more than the traditional wife. She repairs the roof, drives the wagon, and illustrates the self sufficiency of pioneer women.

Wool cards

Scott, P. and B. 1961. Eliza and the Indian war pony. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
This book is based on the true story of Eliza Spalding, the first white child born in the Oregon Territory that is now the state of Idaho. The authors based their story on Eliza's book, Memories of the West, and on letters and diaries of people who lived in Oregon. In 1847, Eliza and others were captured by Cayuse Indians at the Waiilatpu Mission on the Walla Walla. Because of her fluency in the Nez Perce language, Eliza serves as a translator between the Indians and the hostages. In late December, Eliza was reunited with her family.

Talbot, C. J. 1982. The sodbuster venture. New York: Antheneum Publishers.
This is the story of the efforts of two women to make it on their own as homesteaders. The novel depicts life on a homestead: the hard work, drudgery, poor food, and natural disasters, but also the rewards of seeing the fruits of one's labors.

Turner, A. 1985. Dakota dugout. New York: Macmillan.
A grandmother tells this story to her grandchild about what it was life to live in a sod dugout house on the Dakota prairie when she was first married. She tells of the hardships yet reminiscences about the good times in the dugout.

Wilder, L. I. 1935. Little house on the prairie. New York: Harper and Row.
This is the story of Laura and her family as they travel through Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas, and finally build a house in Oklahoma. All the family's activities are told in great detail. Children will enjoy the other Wilder books such as By the shores of silver lake, Little house in the big woods, Little town on the prairie, The long winter, On the banks of plum creek, On the way home, and These happy golden years.

Other Books about Homesteading

Nixon, J. L. 1987. A family apart. New York: Bantam Books.

Strait, T. A. 1979. The price of free land. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.

Turner, A. 1986. Third girl from the left. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

NON-FICTION BOOKS ABOUT WESTWARD EXPANSION

Non-fiction books can provide children with important information to further develop brief textbook lessons. By using non-fiction and fiction books, students can learn about the everyday lives of the people they are studying as well as the cultural and ideological influences of the period. The following materials are arranged by topics: early exploits westward, the overland journey, women and children in the West, Native Americans and the buffalo, and domestic life of the pioneers.

EARLY EXPLOITS WESTWARD

Collins, J. L. 1989. Exploring the American West. New York: Franklin Watts.
This book covers approximately one hundred years, from the exploits of Daniel Boone after the French and Indian War of 1754-1763, to the expeditions of John Charles Fremont in the 1840s and the 1850s. Other explorers included are Lewis and Clark, Robert Stuart and Jed Smith, and Joseph Reddeford Walker. This book provides useful information about the explorations which opened the West to settlers.

OVERLAND JOURNEY

Bloch, L. M. compiler and editor. 1984. Overland to California in 1859: A guide for wagon train travelers.

Cleveland, Ohio: Bloch and Company.
The westward migration to California started in the 1840s and increased to a fevered pitch when gold was discovered in 1848. It was not until 1859 however that a Captain in the U. S. Army decided to write A handbook for overland expeditions. The captain believed that traveling the plains and mountains was an art that must be studied. He believed previous failures and loss of life were due to inadequate preparations in advance. This handbook contains maps, itineraries of the principal routes between the Mississippi and the Pacific, suggested supplies, instructions for camping, marching, encounters with the Indians, how to ford rivers, and information about the Nebraska, Kansas, and Utah Territories and California. Most of this book consists of actual quotations from The prairie traveler by Captain Marcy as well as items from Kansas and Nebraska by Edward Everett Hale and other books published in 1850's about territories of the West. The factual nature of the book provides the reader with the times and the way in which the wagon train pioneers made their way across the country. This book is an excellent resource for students.

Levine, E. 1986. If you traveled West in a covered wagon. New York: Scholastic Inc.
This book answers simple questions children want to know about travel in a covered wagon. Questions such as "What chores would you have to do?"; "What would your family bring in a covered wagon?"; "Would you go to school during the trip?"; and "Could you send a letter or receive one?" This book is useful for elementary-age children.

Stein, C. R. 1984. The story of the Oregon Trail. Chicago: Childrens Press.
Although trappers and fur traders had been traversing the Oregon country since the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was not until missionaries, Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, crossed the trail in 1836 that people were convinced that families and wagon trains could make the trip successfully. This book provides a non-fiction account of the story of the Oregon Trail and its importance in American history. The author provides quotations from the diaries and personal accounts of travelers on the trail such as Narcissa Whitman, Jesse Applegate, and Octavius Howe. This would be an excellent supplementary resource for elementary students.

NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE BUFFALO

Freedman, R. 1988. Buffalo hunt. New York: Holiday House.
To the Indians of the Great Plains, the buffalo was a sacred animal. They praised the Buffalo's spirit, and they depended on it to provide almost everything they needed for survival.

This book details the role of tribal members in the hunt and the joyful celebration which followed a successful hunt. The book is illustrated with the works of George Catlin and Karl Bodmer and other artist adventurers who traveled West in the 1800's.

Freedman, R. 1987. Indian chiefs. New York: Holiday House. In the early 1840's as pioneers packed their families and possessions and journeyed West in search of more land, the white migration claimed the Indians hunting grounds and conflict arose. This book shares the stories of six western chiefs who led their people in historic moments of crisis. The authentic photographs make this a valuable book and the well-written stories of these Indian leaders makes for fascinating reading.

Ziter, C. B. 1988. The moon of falling leaves: The great buffalo hunt. New York: Franklin Watts. The buffalo were an essential element in the life of the American Indian of the Great Plains such as the Crow, Assiniboin, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Sioux, Pawnee, and Kiowa.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

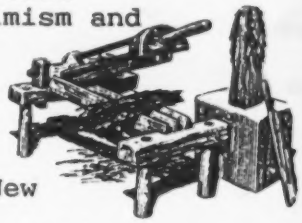
Freedman, R. 1983. Children of the wild West. New York: Clarion Books.
This book contains authentic photographs of the settlement of the western United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the turn of the century. The book highlights the different types of homesteads, frontier schools, building and development of the West, as well as games, parties, and celebrations on the frontier. Winner of "Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies in 1983".

Luchetti, C. and C. Olwell. 1982. Women of the West. St. George, Utah: Antelope Island Press.
This book offers a revealing account of what life was really life for women in the western United States between 1830 and 1920. The most valuable portion of the book is the extensive daily diaries of women who moved westward and homesteaded. Appropriate for grades 9 - adult.

Schlissel, L. 1982. Women's diaries of the westward journey. New York: Schocken Books.
This book is made of the diaries, reminiscences, and letters of 103 women, a random sample among the thousands of women who went West. These overland diaries are filled with information about the route, the watering places, the places where one could feed the cattle and oxen, and the quality of grasses along the way. They seldom contained expressions of intimate feelings, but there are occasions when emotions are revealed. Appropriate for grades 9-adult.

Stratton, J. L. 1981. Pioneer women: Voices from the Kansas frontier. New York: Simon and Schuster.
Based on the autobiographical writings of hundreds of pioneer women, this book contains a living portrait of the women who civilized the frontier. There personal recollections of prairie fires, locust plagues, Indian raids, and blizzards on the plains portray the dangers and excitement of pioneering. Appropriate for grades 9-adult.

West, E. 1985. The youngest pioneers. American Heritage. 37, (December) 90-96.
In the great migration that lasted from 1841 to the start of the Civil War, probably at least 35,000 children pushed west from Missouri to the Pacific coast. This article discusses their role in the great adventure, and suggests that thee young travelers came through with resilience and optimism and an awareness of their own strengths.



DOMESTIC LIFE

Garson, E. 1968. The Laura Ingalls Wilder songbook. New York: Harper and Row.
A nostalgic collection of ballads, folk songs, dances, old hymns, and gospel songs which profile pioneer life as it moved westward. These sixty-two songs and hymns were sung by the Wilder family as they crossed the plains.

Garber, K. compiler. 1974. Nebraska pioneer cookbook. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
The recipes in this book describe the favorite foods of the Native Americans, homesteaders, both American and foreign-born, and the cowboys. Included throughout the book are selections from books and manuscripts that describe pioneer settings. Included are ideas for preserving food, home remedies, and household hints.

Kalman, B. 1981. Early Christmas: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
This book discusses how Christmas has changed over the years including Christmas in the wilderness and the settler's first Christmas.

Kalman, B. 1982. The early family home: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
Early homes are featured in this book as well as how to make soap and candles. Special events such as work parties, quilting bees, and weddings are featured.

Kalman, B. 1982. Early schools: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
This book describes life in a one-room school house.

Kalman, B. 1982. Food for the settler: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
This resource discusses how and what settlers found to eat. It provides recipes and discusses special holiday meals. In addition, it highlights how to make homemade bread, cheese, butter, etc. Early settler kitchen utensils are illustrated.

Kalman, B. 1982. Early settler children: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
Excellent book to use when discussing domestic chores, toys, games, schooling, and expectations of pioneer children.

Kalman, B. 1981. Early village life: The early settler life series. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
This books provides insights into the pioneer's need for self-sufficiency.

Perl, L. 1977. Hunter's stew and hangtown fry: What pioneer American ate and why. New York: The Seabury Press.
Through the foods they ate Lila Perl traces the movement of America's pioneers into the wilderness West of the Appalachians.

Tunis, E. 1961. Frontier living. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
This classic contains every aspect of daily life on the American frontier in vivid pen and ink drawings. It includes dwellings, clothing, food, furniture, household articles, transportation, amusements, superstitions, governance, schooling, and religion.

Walker, B. M. 1979. Little house cookbook: Frontier foods from Laura Ingalls Wilder's classic stories. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
Carefully researched and tested, these are authentic recipes of dishes described in the "little house" books. Included are pioneer methods for churning butter, drying blackberries, and making ice cream.

CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES AND ADDITIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT WESTWARD EXPANSION

Well-researched articles and primary sources can support children's developing understandings of an era or movement. These articles and documents are especially valuable for reluctant readers because they have an appealing format, are informative, and are relatively easy to read.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young people. December 1980, Vol. 1, No. 12.
This issue of Cobblestone focuses on the life of Willa Cather, Nebraska pioneer and American novelist. The magazine provides interesting background to her novels. In addition, this issue has an excellent map of the Mormon and Oregon Trail through Nebraska. Another feature of the magazine if the story of Red Cloud, chief of the Oglala Sioux Indians and the leader of the Indian resistance to whites settling the Nebraska territory. The issue tells how to make a sod house and discusses life in a soddie.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young people. May 1980, Vol. 1, No. 5.
The construction of the first transcontinental railroad is the focus of this issue. A television script is included for children to dramatize. An article by Robert Louis Stevenson entitled "Across the Plains" describes the last part of his journey via train from Iowa to California in 1879.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young children. February 1986, Vol. 7, No.2.
The writings and early background of Laura Ingalls Wilder are discussed in this enchanting issue. Life on the prairie, quilting instructions, and a recipe for the Wilder's hasty pudding are included. The issue is illustrated with the Wilder homes. Excellent background for the Little House books.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young children. December 1981, Vol. 2, No. 12.
This volume provides valuable information about the Oregon Trail. It discusses the Whitman's Mission. In addition, the volume has articles about John Charles Fremont and his writings which encouraged individuals to emigrate to Oregon. There is also a story of Red Cloud who was the only Indian chief to win a war with the United States. See also "The Santa Fe Trail" issue of Cobblestone May, 1990, Vol. II, No. 5.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young children. August, 1981, Vol. 2, No. 8.
The American buffalo, the relationship of the Plains Indians to the buffalo, and the destructive effect of the westward movement are well told in this volume.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young children. September, 1990. Vol. II, No. 9.
This is the story of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Tribe and his leadership to keep the homeland of his people during the westward movement. He is considered a hero today because of his long struggle to maintain peace and to return his people to their homeland after the Nez Perce War. This issue describes the movement West from an Indian perspective.

Cobblestone: History magazine for young children. May, 1982, Vol. 3, No. 5.
This issue features a number of articles which would be useful for an understanding of the push westward. "The Rush for Gold," and "The First Californians, will assist young readers to understand the motivation to move West.

The National Archives has released United States Expands: 1785-1842, a documentary teaching package that contains reproductions of 45 documents and 22 slides from the holdings of the Archives, designed for use in upper elementary to college level classrooms. These materials present a side of western history not commonly portrayed--that of the substantial commitment of the Federal government to westward expansion at every phase of settlement. They also highlight the international character of life in the early American West and the tenuousness of the nation's supposed Manifest Destiny. The package is distributed for $40 from SIRS, Inc., PO Box 2348, Boca Raton, Florida 33427-2348.

The California Gold Rush: 1849 is a jackdaw which conveys the wild excitement of the gold rush that followed as news of the find reached the East coast. Included in the primary source packet are a poster of the Miner's Ten Commandments, articles from Harper's Weekly, The Placer Times, a map of the gold regions of California in 1849, a gold rush bill of fare, a "mining methods" poster, and additional resources for the teacher. The order number is R-A3 for $21.95. Send to Jackdaw Publishers, P. O. Box A03, Amawalk, New York, 10501 or call (914) 962-6911.

By using fiction and non-fiction tradebooks, children's magazines, and primary source documents, teachers can help students develop an appreciation for our pioneering past. These materials can translate the information found in textbooks into vivid spectacles of human drama and triumph. The indominable spirit of those who moved West is waiting to be rediscovered in these captivating resources.

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